
NORTH I-44 HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ordinance 60370 (Committee Substitute Board Bill No. 11)

Introduced by Alderman Timothy J. Dee

An ordinance concerning the designation of the "North I-44 Historic District" as an historic district; containing legislative findings and declarations with respect to the procedures followed with respect to a petition for designation of the "North I-44 Neighborhood" as an historic district; designating the "North I-44 Neighborhood" as an historic district, and describing the boundaries of such district; containing, identifying and providing for maintenance of a general location map of such district; stating the historic and architectural significance and the current economic condition of such district; describing the advantages to residents and property owners of such district and to the City which shall be anticipated as a consequence of historic district designation; containing, identifying and providing for maintenance of a plat at a scale of not more than 300 feet to the inch indicating the existing uses and zoning of all properties within the district; stating a general plan for the district indicating planned or proposed restoration, development and demolition within the district; stating amendments to the existing zoning classification and boundaries necessary to conform to the proposed plan; with a severability clause and an emergency clause.

WHEREAS, Ordinance 57986 provides a procedure for designation of historic districts; and

WHEREAS, a petition for designation of the North I-44 Neighborhood as hereinafter defined as an historic district was filed with the Heritage and Urban Design Commission by the Alderman for the ward within which such proposed district is located on January 23, 1987; and

WHEREAS, the maps, statements, plats, plans, and standards, which Section 24.12.070 Revised Code, City of St. Louis, 1980, as amended, provides shall be submitted with such a petition, either had been filed with the Heritage and Urban Design Commission before the filing of such petition or were maintained and possessed by such Commission when such petition was filed; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 24.12.080 the Heritage and Urban Design Commission transmitted to the Director of the Community Development Agency and the President of the Board of Public Service, copies of such petition and certain related materials; and

WHEREAS, the community development commission and the Board of Public Service have reviewed the petition and exhibits and documents relating thereto, and have reported to the Board of Aldermen in writing; and

WHEREAS, the Heritage and Urban Design Commission held a public hearing on March 26, 1987, within the time and after giving the notice by publication and placarding prescribed by Section 24.12.100 Revised Code, City of St. Louis, 1980, as amended; and

WHEREAS, at such hearing numerous residents expressed their views respecting the proposed district; and

WHEREAS, the appropriate standing committee of the Board of Aldermen has conducted a public hearing on this Bill, after causing notice to be given in a newspaper of general circulation in the City at least fifteen (15) days prior to the public hearing of the pendency of said proposed ordinance; and

WHEREAS, designation of the North I-44 Neighborhood as an historic district is in the public interest and will promote the public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of Ordinance 57986 were substantially complied with respect to the historic district designation petition and the subsequent proceedings thereon notwithstanding certain provisions of said Ordinance to the contrary, specifically Section One, 896.020, (5 through 8) lack of compliance with which are harmless and not prejudicial to the district or any person; and

WHEREAS, further delay in designation of the North I-44 Neighborhood as an historic district would be prejudicial to the public interest and contrary to the desires of a majority of the residents of such proposed district who have heretofore expressed their views on such designation.

Be it ordained by the City of St. Louis as follows:

SECTION ONE.

The Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis hereby finds and declares that, with respect to the petition for historic district designation for the North I-44 Neighborhood and the subsequent proceedings thereon:

- a. The provisions of Ordinance 57986 have been substantially complied with, notwithstanding certain provisions of said Ordinance to the contrary, specifically Section One, 896.020, (5 through 8) lack of compliance with which is hereby determined to be harmless and not prejudicial to the district or any person;
- b. Further delay in designation of the North I-44 Neighborhood (as hereinafter defined) as an historic district would be prejudicial to the public interest and contrary to the intent of Ordinance 57986.

SECTION TWO.

Notwithstanding its present zoning designation, the following area of the City of St. Louis, together with the improvements therein, is designated an historic district:

Beginning at the center line of Park, 137.5 feet west of 39th, south along a line approximately 137.5 feet west of 39th to its intersection with the western line of City Block 4960, lot 080, south along said line across Folsom to its point of intersection with the southern line of Folsom, east

along said line to its point of intersection with the western line of City Block 4961, lot 200, south along said line across the alley bisecting City Block 4961 to its point of intersection with the southern line of said alley, west along said line to its intersection with the western line of City Block 4961, lot 240, south along said line across Blaine to its point of intersection with the western line of City Block 4962, lot 190, south across the alley bisecting City Block 4962 to its intersection with the western line of City Block 4962, lot 210, south across McRee to its point of intersection with the southern line of McRee, east along said line to its point of intersection with the western line of City Block 5438, lot 200, south across the alley bisecting City Block 5438 to its point of intersection with the western line of City Block 5438, lot 210, south along said line across Lafayette to its point of intersection with the southern line of Lafayette, west along the southern line of Lafayette to the center line of Vandeventer, generally northeast to the center line of Tower Grove, north to the San Francisco Railway underpass, generally northeast along said railway to the center line of Park, east to the origin; to be known as the North I-44 Historic District. The boundaries of such district as herein described are set forth in a map, which map shall at all times be maintained in the offices of the Heritage and Urban Design Commission.

SECTION THREE.

(a) The historic, architectural, cultural and aesthetic significances of the North I-44 Historic District is as follows:

The North I-44 Neighborhood District in St. Louis qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C and is eligible in the following areas of significance:

1. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** The District illustrates the development of a significant American theme: the migration to the suburbs. In 1891, as critical commuter lines from the urban core reached Dundee Place, one of the decade's costliest and most intensive promotions of a suburban subdivision was launched by a small group of local and out of state investors. Located some distance southwest of the inner city, the new "street car suburb" was one of the largest subdivisions ever platted in St. Louis. Dundee Place offered improvements in lot size, sanitation, and housing quality to members of the working and middle classes seeking relief from conditions in older residential sections. A portion of the tract, in the northern sector, adjacent to tracks of the Missouri Pacific and Frisco Railroads was wisely reserved by the developers for industrial purposes. By 1895, industrial growth in the northern sector presaged the transformation of the District from a middle-class commuter neighborhood to a diverse community housed in multi-family dwellings as well as single family homes.

2. **ARCHITECTURE:** The district embodies a wide range of representative types of middle and working class urban housing and small commercial buildings constructed between 1885 and 1932. Expressed in traditional St. Louis materials of brick and terra cotta, the buildings are distinguished by the high quality of the brickwork and architectural detailing. Styles include Italianate/Mansard, picturesque Queen Anne and Romanesque, a strong Classical Revival cadre whose influence was felt throughout the development of the District, and early twentieth century Craftsman and Bungalow. Although less than half were designed by architects, a large proportion of the most interesting and effective buildings were speculatively built by owner/contractors who frequently designed rows as cohesive units while imparting individual identities to the building. The factory and warehouse buildings in the northwest sector of the District are good examples of late-nineteenth century industrial architecture. Constructed in 1895-96 by the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company from plans drawn by locally prominent Isaac Taylor, the complex included the world's largest tobacco factory. Although a number of the buildings have been demolished, what remains conveys a good sense of the importance and enormity of the original complex. The District's strong visual integrity is a result of density, similar building costs, materials, and scale, and a uniform building line.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Residential development of land west of Grand Avenue was dependent on factors which stimulated the growth of hundreds of suburban tracts in American cities across the country in the nineteenth century. Aversion to crowded, smoke-polluted conditions the inner-cities made semi-rural peripheral lands appealing to increasing numbers of the working and middle classes. preliminary to settlement, however, the appearance of experienced speculative developers was necessary to provide initial capital for the purchase, subdivision and promotion of large farm estates such as the McRee and Tyler land. Also essential to development was the construction of networks of utilities and public transit—prerequisites for attracting prospective builders and residents. The houses and flats which built up the new suburban subdivisions also offered improvements over older, inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to important sewer and water lines, they provided front yards, separate street-front entrances and porches, and frequently more fashion-conscious architectural detailing. The history of the Tiffany District in many ways follows a typical development pattern of nineteenth century American suburbs and marks the appearance of one of south St. Louis' first street car suburb which allowed the diffusion of population from the inner city.

St. Louis' population swell between 1880 and 1890 (a hefty 29 percent) presented a bonanza for out-of-state capitalists and promoters. Among those attracted to the City was Thomas A Scott, a young Canadian (born 1854) with experience in Chicago and Kansas City real estate markets in partnership with his brother Samuel. Described as "one of the most daring real estate operators St. Louis has ever known," Scott opened a St. Louis

office for the partnership in 1888 and immediately embarked upon a \$25,000 advertising campaign to tout St. Louis real estate in the eastern press. Within the year Scott had raised sufficient eastern capital to incorporate two companies whose purposes include investment in promising “western” real estate, transportation, utilities and mining. The St. Louis real estate targeted for development comprised un-subdivided lands west of Grand held by Tyler and McRee estates. In 1887, Thomas Scott obtained an option on the McRee tract with a proviso that he was to improve the tract by subdividing the property and creating streets. Scott expended some \$35,000 on these improvements. In September of 1888, the Dundee Land and Investment Company, through shareholder Thomas Scott, purchased acreage equivalent to twenty-two city blocks from a McRee heir for \$450,352. Platted as Dundee Place in June 1889, the land sloped west from Grand Avenue to Manchester road (now Vandeventer Avenue) and was bounded on the north by Park Avenue and the tracks of several railroads, and on the south by McRee Avenue.

The first section of Dundee Place lots was delayed two years until June 1891, by which time critical transit lines had reached the District from downtown and nearby railroad tracks to the north were bridged across Grand Avenue. Beginning in May 1891, the Scotts invested \$10,000 in a massive siege of newspaper promotion which featured views of the property and extensive copy.

Enthusiastic newspaper coverage in advance of the sale noted that the property compared favorably with popular areas developing along Lindell Boulevard, on of the city’s most prestigious areas. It was predicted that a tract such as this, the largest one in the City , would never again be offered at public auction.

Capitalizing on Grand Avenue’s well-established residential prestige and its importance as a north/south corridor (linking the City by the new suspension bridge) the Dundee Place sale was advertised as the “Grand Avenue Auction.” Trolley, cable car lines and suburban railroad tracks made possible the boast the ‘No Subdivision in the City has so many lines running into the business center.’ Improvements included the grading of streets and some lots, a few sewer and water lines and granitoid sidewalks at the eastern and western edges of Dundee Place. Akin to present-day subdivision developments, eighteen for-sale, two-story brick model homes were constructed in advance of the auction to demonstrate the possibilities of the sites to those attending.

Although the only deed restriction controlling Dundee Place lots was a setback of 15 feet, restriction on the Tyler and Shaw lands to the south were used as selling points offering protection to the “whole section from the inroads of smoke, furnaces and unhealthy factory fumes.” While marketing Dundee Place, the Scotts were simultaneously initiating promotion of Shaw and Tyler Places in which tracts the brothers also held interests. The Scotts discretely neglected to mention that Dundee Place contained no protective restriction similar to those in Tyler and Shaw Places; nor did the advertising disclose that Dundee Places’ northern sector had been quietly reserved for industrial development.

The promoters were cagily bi-partisan in the naming of the new east/west streets laid out between Park and McRee Avenues. Folsom was the maiden name of President Grover Cleveland's wife; Blaine was named for James G. Blaine, Republican Presidential Nominee defeated by Cleveland in 1884. The north/south streets, Vandeventer (now 39th) and Cabanne (now Spring) were extensions of existing streets.

The sales pitch was directed to both real estate speculators and home builders ("mechanics and businessmen") – a broad section of the middle class which in fact eventually settled the District. Spin-off from the Chicago World's Fair (1893), predicted to bring "Millions of people into the Mississippi Valley," thousands of whom might settle in St. Louis, was assurance to speculators of a safe investment. Land was expected to "go cheap" with easy terms of one-third cash and the balance in one and two years at six percent interest. According to the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, the promotion and auction were not disappointing for "fully 5,000 people inspected the property." Hundreds attended the auction and nearly half of the lots were sold, including virtually all of the area between 39th Street and Grand Avenue. Considered one-half to one-third below expectation, lot prices averaged \$21.32 per front foot, ranging from a high of \$81.00 along the choice Grand Avenue frontage and descending with the land grade to the teens.

According to a report of the auction printed in the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, the sale had actually been "forced" by a pressing need to pay off the mortgage indebtedness. Once that object was accomplished, the remaining portions of the tract were withdrawn and the sale closed. Quite possibly, as suggested by the broad purposes listed in the Dundee Land and Investment Company corporate charter, the Scotts had plans for the unsold, northern portions of the tract. Whatever dreams there may have been, however, were never realized. In the spring of 1895, shortly after the Liggett and Myer Tobacco Company announced plans to build the "world's largest" tobacco factory in the undeveloped northern portion, the Dundee Land and Investment Company went into bankruptcy and the company's remaining assets were put up for auction. These events proved to be of major significance in the future of Dundee Place.

The selection of Dundee Place as the site of the Liggett and Myer factory coupled with the sudden and inexpensive availability of the remaining Dundee Place lots prompted renewed interest in the area. The prospect of the convenient factory sites attracted a variety of industries to the northern sector and adjacent areas. In turn, there was great demand for housing for the construction workers and subsequently, for factory employees:

Work on the tobacco factory...will provide employment for an immense number of people in all lines. The prospect of the building and of the large number of hands who will be employed regularly, has caused an increased demand for property...A great deal of exceptionally cheap property can be obtained...No one has ever been able to explain why property as desirable and as well-located sells at so low a price.

Factory sites, business lots, and residential lots are to be offered at the Receiver's peremptory auction sale of Dundee Place Realty next Saturday afternoon. The property is therefore subdivided for more diversified uses than that ordinarily offered at auction sales and as a consequence it will attract all classes of buyers...dealers in all kinds of heavy merchandise who desire to find new quarters will be attracted by the factory site section of the property, which has first-class switch facilities. Builders and speculators realize the advantage of investing in property that is rapidly growing into prominence as a residence locality and landlords who cater to the working class will find this is an excellent field for investment as well....

Led by the mammoth Liggett & Myer Tobacco Company complex, the northern sector of Dundee Place quickly assumed an exclusively industrial aspect. In addition to Liggett & Myer, the smaller Wellman-Twire Tobacco Company built in Dundee Place in 1897 and close by were the Huttig Sash and Door Company, the Koken Iron Company, the yards and shops of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and after 1899, the new headquarters of the United Railway Company.

At the turn of the century, stimulated by the rapid increase in population, Grand Avenue, Tower Grove Avenue and 39th Street began to develop as commercial strips. #9th Street, which was served by a branch of the Tiffany Trolley Line, added nine store/flat combinations between 1901 and 1909. Eventually, both Tower Grove Avenue and 39th Street spawned small shops selling shoes, hardware, cigars and groceries and offered services such as hair-cuts and tailoring. Taverns, a pool room and restaurant provided entertainment.

Thus, by the turn of the century, less than ten years after the opening of Dundee Place, the major forces that were to shape the District's growth had been set in motion. For the next 30 ears, Dundee Place/Tiffany neighborhood continued to grow along the patterns already established.

ARCHITECTURE

Although the first two houses in Tiffany, 4311 and 4319 McRee predated the Dundee Place subdivision, they foreshadowed the largely middle-class, single-family character projected by the subdivision's promoters. Between 1885 and 1899, approximately 107 buildings were constructed. Single-family homes outnumbered multi-family dwellings by well over two to one. Originally platted with fifty-foot fronts, by the time construction began, many of the District's lots had been reduced to a denser urban pattern of twenty-five or thirty-three front feet. With one to two exceptions, the 1890's houses were one to two and one half stories, brick and ranged in cost from \$1,500 to \$7,000. Although more than half of the houses were speculatively built and few were designed by architects, the early established practice of speculatively built contractor housing generally reflected high art fashions in home building, often with interesting effects.

The two homes constructed in 1885 (one of which is 4307-11 McRee) are good representative examples of the District's Italianate buildings with their two-over-two segmentally-arched windows, first-story three-sided bays and wood cornices.

Among the most interesting of the 1890's homes are those built as "model homes" prior to the first Dundee Place auction in 1891. The People's Investment and Building Company, a real estate and construction company which the Scotts may have known about from their Kansas City experiences, built all eighteen. Erected in groups of threes on Blaine, McRee and Folsom in the blocks adjacent to Tower Grove Avenue, the homes were all two-story, two or three-bay brick. Exterior styling varied from group to group and demonstrated such features as gabled and hipped roofs; ornamental brick and terra cotta work; enriched wood cornices and decorative millwork; multi-planar facades and bay windows.

The flat-roofed multi-family buildings which makes up the largest percentage of the District's housing after 1900 first appeared in Dundee Place in 1893 at 4117-21 Blaine. Terra cotta, traditionally employed for ornament on St. Louis' late-nineteenth and early 20th-century buildings, forms a band at the cornice. (Terra cotta insets also appear on the building immediately to the west partially visible in the photo.) Similar buildings were constructed in 1895 at 4111-15 Blaine. These flats all have separate front entrances for each unit.

The massive Liggett & Myer tobacco factory complex in the northern sector was designed by the locally-distinguished architect Isaac Taylor in 1895; construction continued on the first group of buildings through 1897. Taylor, architect for such well-known St. Louis buildings as the Planters' Hotel, the Rialto Building; Peters Shoe Company and the Silk Exchange (listed in the National Register) enhanced the dignified red brick facades of the buildings with corbelling at the roof line. The only applied ornament was the large terra cotta star – in honor of the company's star-plug brand. The complex was considered the largest in the world and is a good example of St. Louis' late nineteenth century light manufacturing structures.

The number of multi-family units built between 1900 and 1909 outnumbered single-family houses from two to twelve families; four and six-family buildings predominated. During this decade, almost 200 buildings were constructed, a phenomenon attributed by the *Globe Democrat* to a post-World's Fair boom, but which seems more directly related in industrial growth and demands for workers' housing. The 1904 World's Fair buildings, however, did leave an architectural legacy which is visible in many of the post-Fair flats which display varying degrees of classical detailing and ornament. A common practice was disguising the ubiquitous flat roofs with such devices as attic windows, pediments, heavy cornices and pseudo-hipped roofs. Single-family houses such as 4240 Blaine also have abandoned picturesque profiles for more restrained forms with "colonial" porches.

The opening of new subdivisions between 1910 and 1914 along the southern boundary of the District rapidly filled up the blocks between McRee and Lafayette Avenues. (These blocks were part of the land sold by the McRees to Shaw in 1848 and later bequeathed

by Henry Shaw to the Missouri Botanical Garden.) The additions extended south beyond the Tiffany District blocks and are now severed by the path of Interstate 44. Despite the construction of a number of single-family homes in the new subdivisions, construction of multi-family dwellings surpassed that of single-family homes by a ratio of almost four to one.

During this period, builders and architects working in the District kept abreast of changing architectural style and responded to influences of the Arts and Crafts and Bungalow movements gaining popularity across the nation. Although many of the houses rise a full two stories, they adopt generic bungalow traits such as broad half-timbered gables, large scale brackets, porches extending across the facades, exposed rafters and Prairie/Craftsman multi-light windows. The work of contractor Sam Koplar, who built extensively along Lafayette Avenue, prompted the *Globe-Democrat* to observe that “this neighborhood is taking on quite a bungalow city aspect since the bungalows on Lafayette have been put up.” The rejection of historical detail and exploiting of surface texture for aesthetic effect also spread into other areas of the district where new construction arose.

In 1912, a new building type was added to the District when the first three-story apartment house, the Marquette, was constructed on the southwest corner of Lafayette and Spring. Heralded by the *Globe Democrat* as the only fourth three-story apartment to appear on the City’s south side, the Marquette offered more amenities and services than the conventional flat. Planned with suites of varying sizes for twelve families, all the Marquette apartments were designed with sun porches, adapted for conversion to “conservatories.” A rarity on the south side, the “modern” apartment building was fast gaining acceptance in the fashionable Central West End as an attractive alternative to the burdens of single-family ownership.

In the final decade of buildings (1920-32) construction dropped from a high of 271 buildings in the previous decade to 141 structures. In 1922-23, the bungalow tradition of the Lafayette Additions closed with the construction of eight, two-family flats at 3616-40 McRee. The District’s one religious institution appeared in the 1920’s. The Blaine Avenue Tabernacle was built at 4200 Blaine in 1927.

The current economic conditions of the North I-44 Historic District and the advantages to residents thereof and to the City which are anticipated as a result of historic district designation for such neighborhood are as follows:

Today, the North I-44 Neighborhood is a neighborhood in transition. From the turn-of-the-century to the mid-1960’s, the North I-44 Neighborhood functioned as a solid, highly desirable residential neighborhood housing a rather diverse population. The area was adversely affected by the construction of Interstate 44 in the 1960’s by the growing popularity of the suburbs which prompted an exodus of many long-time residents. A more transient population and a high percentage of multi-unit flats whose owners did not live on the premises created further problems and many of the properties fell into disrepair.

While a few of the structures have recently been renovated in the neighborhood, there are many others in various stages of decline and disrepair with a large number of vacant buildings. Greater incentives are needed to encourage more and better renovation efforts to stabilize and improve the total area. This historic district designation and the investment tax credits which it affords will help stimulate increased development in the district, and the accompanying preservation guidelines would ensure that all renovation is done in accordance with the established rehab standards to ensure that the historical character of the neighborhood is protected, enhanced and perpetuated. A strong, revitalized North I-44 Neighborhood will help preserve the integrity of the area and will contribute to the strength of the City of St. Louis through increased property values and the availability of quality commercial and residential properties.

SECTION FOUR. A set of plats at a scale of not more than 300 feet to the inch, indicating the existing uses of all properties with the North I-44 Historic District shall at all times be maintained in the offices of the Heritage and Urban Design Commission.

SECTION FIVE. The following general plan for the North I-44 Historic District is hereby adopted, to be implemented consistent with the standards in Section Six, and in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Ordinance 57986.

RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE NORTH I-44 NEIGHBORHOOD.

- A. Zoning. No zoning changes are presently proposed. Rezoning to increase density is discouraged.
- B. Density. Dwelling units originally intended for a lower density occupancy shall be restored to that density.
- C. Preservation. The preservation, restoration or rehabilitation of all historic structures and designated as having national, state, city or neighborhood significance or architectural merit shall be guided by the historic standards set out in Section Six hereof. All construction, demolition or alteration of exterior architectural features with respect to any improvement within the North I-44 Historic District is subject to the provisions of Ordinance 57986.

SECTION SIX. The following historic district standards for the North I-44 Historic District are hereby adopted:

(See North I-44 Historic District Standards)

SECTION SEVEN. No amendments to the existing zoning classification and boundaries are necessary to conform to the historic district plan.

SECTION EIGHT. The Heritage and Urban Design Commission and the Office on Heritage and Urban Design shall be responsible for administration of this Ordinance, as provided by, and subject to, the provisions of Ordinance 57986 with appropriate assistance of other City Departments, Divisions, or offices, as provided by City Charter or Ordinances.

SECTION NINE. If any section or portion of a section of this Ordinance is declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining sections and portions of sections shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION TEN. This ordinance being deemed necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health, safety, and welfare, an emergency is hereby declared to exist and this ordinance shall become effective immediately upon its passage and approval by the Mayor.